

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-20 ACDA-12 AID-05 EB-08 IO-14 OMB-01 TRSE-00
/129 W

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R 170020Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 713
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING

UNCLAS SINGAPORE 3167

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, ASEAN, SN, CB, CH, VN, UR
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE FONMIN COMMENTS ON IMPACT OF SRV-CAMBODIA
CONFLICT ON ASEAN

REF: SINGAPORE A-90

1. FOREIGN RAJARATNAM IN INTERVIEW WITH AFP CARRIED
JULY 14 STRAITS TIMES REITERATED GOS CAUTIOUS
WELCOMING OF CHANGED SRV AND SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD
ASEAN. COMMENTS REFLECT GOS AWARENESS OF DANGERS AS
WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASEAN ARISING FROM CONFLICTS
AMONG COMMUNIST STATES. EXCERPTS OF INTERVIEW AS PUB-
LISHED IN STRAITS TIMES FOLLOW.

2. ALTHOUGH NO MENTION MADE OF "PROXY WAR" (AS IN
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EARLIER FEER INTERVIEW REPORTED REPAIR), RAJA POINTS
OUT THAT SRV IS IN SOVIET CAMP AND CHINA IS ALLY OF
CAMBODIA, SO THAT IF CONFLICT BETWEEN SRV AND CAM-
BODIA WORSENS TO EXTENT THAT ALLIES BECOME INVOLVED,
THE PROBLEM BECOMES GLOBAL.

3. ASKED ABOUT ASEAN ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOLU-

TION OF SRV-CAMBODIA CONFLICT, RAJA NOTED THAT ASEAN HAD NOT BEEN ASKED BY PARTIES INVOLVED FOR ITS GOOD OFFICES. HE ADDED THAT ASEAN COULD CONTRIBUTE ONLY IN NEGATIVE SENSE "FIRST, BY NOT TAKING SIDES, SECONDLY, BY NOT ALLOWING ASEAN TO BE USED AS A JUMPING BOARD, OR A SHIELD OR A SPEAR TO INTENSIFY THE CONFLICT IN THE INDO-CHINESE STATES."

4. DISCUSSING CHANGED SOVIET AND SRV ATTITUDES TOWARD ASEAN, RAJA IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "WE WELCOME THE CHANGE, BUT WE KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED BECAUSE TODAY'S FRIENDS CAN BE TOMORROW'S ENEMIES." DESCRIBING THE CHANGE AS A "TACTICAL MOVE," RAJA ATTRIBUTED SOVIETS' FAVORABLE VIEW TOWARD ASEAN TO FACT THAT ASEAN IS "ONLY REGIONAL ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVELY FUNCTIONING IN ASEA" AND TO RECOGNITION OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE OF ASEAN THROUGH DIALOGUES BY EEC, US, AND JAPAN. CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR ASEAN MAY ALSO HAVE INFLUENCED SOVIET-VIETNAMESE CHANGE, RAJA ADDED.

5. ASKED WHETHER VIETNAM WOULD EVENTUALLY JOIN ASEA, RAJA IS REPORTED AS REPLYING THAT VIETNAM HAD NOT INDICATED A WISH TO JOIN ASEAN, BUT RATHER WANTED "A NEW ASEAN."

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